

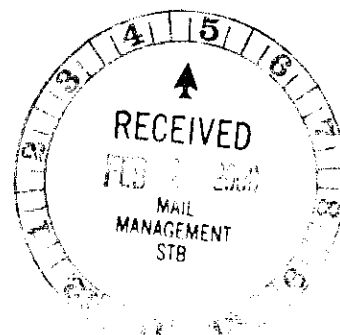
197406



11650, BOUL. MÉTROPOLITAIN EST
MONTREAL, QUÉBEC H1B 1A5
TÉLÉPHONE : (514) 645-4561
TÉLÉCOPIEUR : (514) 645-6978

RECEIVED
Office of the Secretary

FEB 29 2000



Montreal, February 23, 2000

Mr. Vernon A. Williams, Secretary
Surface Transportation Board
Office of the Secretary
Case Control Unit
1925 K Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20423-0001

att: STB Ex Parte No. 582

Dear Sir :

Bitumar Inc. is an asphalt manufacturer that is a major user of rail service in the U.S. and Canada. The purpose of this letter is to comment on the issues to be discussed on March 8th, 2000 in Ex Parte 582.

We encourage the Surface Transportation Board to focus on whether the proposed CN-BNSF combination is good for shippers, not on potential downstream effects. The CN-BNSF combination should be judged on its merits and if other carriers propose mergers, then these cases ought to be evaluated on their merits.

The timing of the proposed CN-BNSF combination is not the central issue for our company. Our concern is service. Recent mergers have failed on service, not because of timing. Accordingly, the Surface Transportation Board should focus on ensuring that CN-BNSF combination, and any other future mergers, will deliver service.

The Surface Transportation Board has a comprehensive process to evaluate railroad transactions and protect the public interest. It should fairly evaluate the CN-BNSF combination according to that process. Do not let other railroads use the Surface Transportation Board process to protect themselves and not shippers.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Alain Houle".

Alain Houle
Bitumar Inc.